

Focus. . . Teen Pregnancies in Missouri

Despite an increasing population among Missouri teens, both the actual number of pregnancies and the rate of pregnancy are decreasing. Table 1 illustrates these opposing trends by age group. Birth and pregnancy rates among females 15-19 will be the focus of this study.

Figure 1 illustrates the decline in pregnancy rates by the type of pregnancy outcome for females 15-19 from 1980 to 1998. Pregnancy rate includes the sum of induced abortions, fetal deaths, and live births divided by the number of females in a specified age group and is noted per 1,000 females. As mentioned in an earlier report¹, teen pregnancies decreased from the early 1980s to the mid-1980s and then began increasing until 1991 when they began declining again. At the same time the number of females 15-19 declined throughout the 1980s and began increasing in 1993, a trend which continues.

Ventura et al.² report that the birth rate for U. S. teenagers 15-17 years decreased 16 percent from 1991 - 1997 (1997 is the most current national data available) and the rate for teenagers 18-19 declined 11 percent. The overall national decrease was 14.8 percent from 62.1 births for teens age 15-19 per 1,000 females in 1991 to 52.9 in 1997. Missouri shows a larger decrease beginning with a higher birth rate for ages 15-19 (64.4) in 1991 and ending with a lower rate (51.5) in 1997 - a decrease of 20 percent. In addition 1998 data showing a birth rate of 51.2 indicate that the decline is continuing. By age group Missouri shows nearly a 24 percent drop among 15-17 year old teens from 1991-1997 (38.7 in 1991 to 29.6 in 1997) with a continued decline to 29.1 in 1998. As with the nation, the decrease is less among the older teens: 14 percent - from 100.3 in 1991 to 86.3 in 1997 with a continuing decrease to 83.8 in 1998.

Pregnancies to females under age 15 constitute less than two percent of all teen pregnancies. From 1991 to 1998, the pregnancy rate among 10-14 year olds dropped from 2.1 to 1.2 - a decline of 42 percent. In terms of events, this means a drop from close to 400 pregnancies per year to a little over 200 pregnancies per year. In addition, the proportion of all teen pregnancies occurring to the very youngest girls (under 15) has dropped from 2.5 percent to 1.8 percent.

The decline in birth rates is greatest among blacks both in the nation and in Missouri. Among teens 15-19 the birth rate for Missouri blacks decreased more than the national black rate from 145.3 in 1991 to 103.0 in 1997 - a 29 percent decline - compared to the national decrease of 23 percent². Missouri and U. S. white teens 15-19 did not fare as well - experiencing only declines of 15 percent (U. S.) and 16 percent (Missouri). The Missouri birth rate for blacks 15-19, despite the decline remains higher than the national rate (103.0 for Missouri vs. 89.5 for the U.S.). Figure 2 shows the trend in fertility by age and race of the mother. As with the nation, the largest decrease in birth rates occurred among 15-17 year old blacks with a decline of nearly 25.6 percent in Missouri and 26 percent nationally. White teens aged 18-19 showed the smallest decline in birth rates dropping only 8.6 percent. Nevertheless, as Figure 2 illustrates, births occur more frequently among black teens than among white teens so that the large decline among 15-17 year old blacks brings them down below the birth rate of 18-19 whites for the first time.

The percent of teen births occurring to teens who had a previous birth also decreased from 1991 to 1996 from 25.1 percent to 21.9 percent (U.S.) and from 25.8 percent to 20.9 percent (Missouri). In Missouri, 1997 continued this trend with 20.6 percent of all teen births occurring to teens with a previous birth. However, 1998 shows a slight increase (21.1) in repeat births particularly among whites (to 18.7 from a low of 17.5 in 1997).

Teen birth rates vary by geographic area as is indicated in Table 2. Although in 1991 the birth rate for urban Missouri³ was nearly equal to that of the rural area, by 1997 the birth rate for the urban area had dropped 24.2 percent compared to 11.5 percent for the rural area so that the urban rate was nearly 16 percent lower than the rural rate. During the same time, pregnancy rates dropped 1.7 times as much in urban Missouri as in rural Missouri (28.7 percent to 17.1 percent). Therefore, pregnancy rates are identical (nearly 65 per 1000 females 15-19), with abortion rates remaining higher in the urban area.

Nationally, pregnancy rates among females 15-19 are nearly double the birth rates². In Missouri the relationship between pregnancy rates and birth rates are much closer because of the relatively low abortion rate (12.0 per 1,000 females in 1998). Abortion rates declined approximately 40 percent from 1991-1997 among Missouri teens 15-19. Births constitute 80 percent of all teen pregnancies in Missouri. Of these births, 79.6 percent are to unmarried mothers - up from 71 percent in 1991. The percent of all teen births which are to unmarried mothers is highest among blacks and in the urban area but the biggest increase has been in the rural area - up from 54.9 percent in 1991 to 66.8 percent in 1997 (21.7 percent increase) and among whites - an increase of 20.9 percent from 59.2 percent to 71.6 percent in 1997. The trend continues in 1998 with 69 percent of all rural teen births to unmarried mothers and 73 percent of all white teen births to unmarried mothers.

Teen pregnancy is down despite an increasing teenage population. Both births and abortions are declining in absolute numbers and rates. The biggest decreases are among younger teens, blacks and in the urban population. Ventura et al.², attribute the decline to a decrease in sexual activity among teenagers, the increased use of contraceptives among sexually active teens, and the use of injectable and implant contraceptives. Despite the overall favorable trend toward decreasing pregnancies among 15-19 year old teens, there are some less favorable trends that should be of concern. Births to unmarried mothers constitute a larger proportion of teen pregnancies (80 percent of the births and 64 percent of all pregnancies). The decrease in teen pregnancy is not as rapid in the rural population. In addition, the proportion of pregnancies resulting in births to unmarried mothers is increasing rapidly from 45 percent of teen pregnancies in 1991 to 61 percent in 1998. Therefore, despite the declines in both the birth and pregnancy rates, the number of teen births to unmarried mothers remains the same so that approximately 8,000 births in Missouri are born each year to unmarried females 15-19 years of age. In the rural area the number of births to unmarried teen mothers actually increased from 2,000 births in 1991 to over 2,500 births in 1998.

In summary:

- Teen pregnancy and birth rates are declining.
- Missouri shows a larger decrease than the U.S..
- The biggest decrease is among 15-17 year old blacks.
- Birth rates have dropped more in urban areas than in rural areas so that teen pregnancy rates are nearly identical in rural and urban areas.
- Nearly 8,000 births occur each year to unmarried females 15-19 years old in Missouri.

References:

1 "Missouri Teen Pregnancies," Missouri Monthly Vital Statistics, State Center for Health Statistics, August 1992.

2 Ventura SJ, Mathews TJ, Curtin SC. "Declines in Teenage Birth Rates, 1991-1997: National and State Patterns." National Vital Statistics Reports: Vol. 47, No. 12, Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, 1998.

3 Urban Missouri is defined as the Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) including Andrew, Buchanan, Jackson, Cass, Clay, Clinton, Lafayette, Platte, Ray, Jasper, Newton, Greene, Christian, Webster, Boone, St. Louis City, St. Louis County , Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, St. Charles and Warren counties.

Table 1

Resident Teenage Pregnancies by Age by Year: Missouri 1991-1998

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Female Population Estimates								
10-14	182,810	186,579	191,200	193,105	192,900	194,400	195,100	195,700
15-17	100,700	103,149	105,800	110,000	113,600	117,400	120,400	119,500
18-19	7,1700	68,432	69,400	70,000	71,600	73,800	75,700	81,000
15-19	172,400	171,581	175,200	180,000	185,200	191,200	196,100	200,500
Numbers								
Abortions								
10-14	179	161	178	144	161	124	121	89
15-17	1,379	1,271	1,173	1,118	1,066	1,064	961	882
18-19	2,365	2,003	1,868	1,717	1,647	1,603	1,562	1,518
15-19	3,744	3,274	3,041	2,835	2,713	2,667	2,523	2,400
Live Births								
10-14	203	206	237	224	215	181	166	137
15-17	3,902	3941	3,849	3,863	3,695	3,635	3,558	3,479
18-19	7,193	6,895	6,571	6,707	6,577	6,618	6,536	6,791
15-19	11,095	10,836	10,420	10,570	10,272	10,253	10,094	10,270
Pregnancies								
10-14	384	371	417	376	380	310	291	228
15-17	5,314	5,239	5,055	5,004	4,798	4,725	4,544	4,391
18-19	9,607	8,945	8,494	8,461	8,263	8,255	8,141	8,350
15-19	14,921	14,184	13,549	13,465	13,061	12,980	12,685	12,741
Rates								
Abortions								
10-14	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.5
15-17	13.7	12.3	11.1	10.2	9.4	9.1	8.0	7.4

18-19	33.0	29.3	26.9	24.5	23.0	21.7	20.6	18.7
15-19	21.7	19.1	17.4	15.8	14.6	13.9	12.9	12.0
<i>Live Births</i>								
10-14	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.7
15-17	38.7	38.2	36.4	35.1	32.5	31.0	29.6	29.1
18-19	100.3	100.8	94.7	95.8	91.9	89.7	86.3	83.8
15-19	64.4	63.2	59.5	58.7	55.5	53.6	51.5	51.2
<i>Pregnancies</i>								
10-14	2.1	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.2
15-17	52.8	50.8	47.8	45.5	42.2	40.2	37.7	36.7
18-19	134.0	130.7	122.4	120.9	115.4	111.9	107.5	103.1
15-19	86.5	82.7	77.3	74.8	70.5	67.9	64.7	63.5

Table 2
Teenage Pregnancies by Type and Resident Urban Status

	<i>1991</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
Rural females 15-19	56,576	56,217	57,855	59,386	60,813	62,729	64,400
Urban females 15-19	115,824	115,300	117,345	120,614	124,387	128,471	131,700
Rural Live Births	3685	3,621	3,531	3,681	3,705	3,722	3,709
Urban Live Births	7,410	7,215	6,889	6,889	6,567	6,531	6,385
Rural abortions	698	562	588	539	532	528	430
Urban abortions	3,046	2,712	2,453	2,296	2,181	2,140	2,093
Rural pregnancies	4,408	4,211	4,147	4,236	4,254	4,274	4,161
Urban pregnancies	10,513	9,973	9,402	9,229	8,807	8,707	8,524
<i>Rates</i>							
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Rural Live Births	65.1	64.4	61.0	62.0	60.9	59.3	57.6
Urban Live Births	64.0	62.6	58.7	57.1	52.8	50.8	48.5
Rural abortions	12.3	10.0	10.2	9.1	8.7	8.4	6.7
Urban abortions	26.3	23.5	20.9	19.0	17.5	16.7	15.9
Rural pregnancies	77.9	74.9	71.7	71.3	70.0	68.1	64.6
Urban pregnancies	90.8	86.5	80.1	76.5	70.8	67.8	64.7

Figure 1
Trends in Teen Pregnancy Rates per 1,000 Females 15-19 by Type:
Missouri 1980-1998

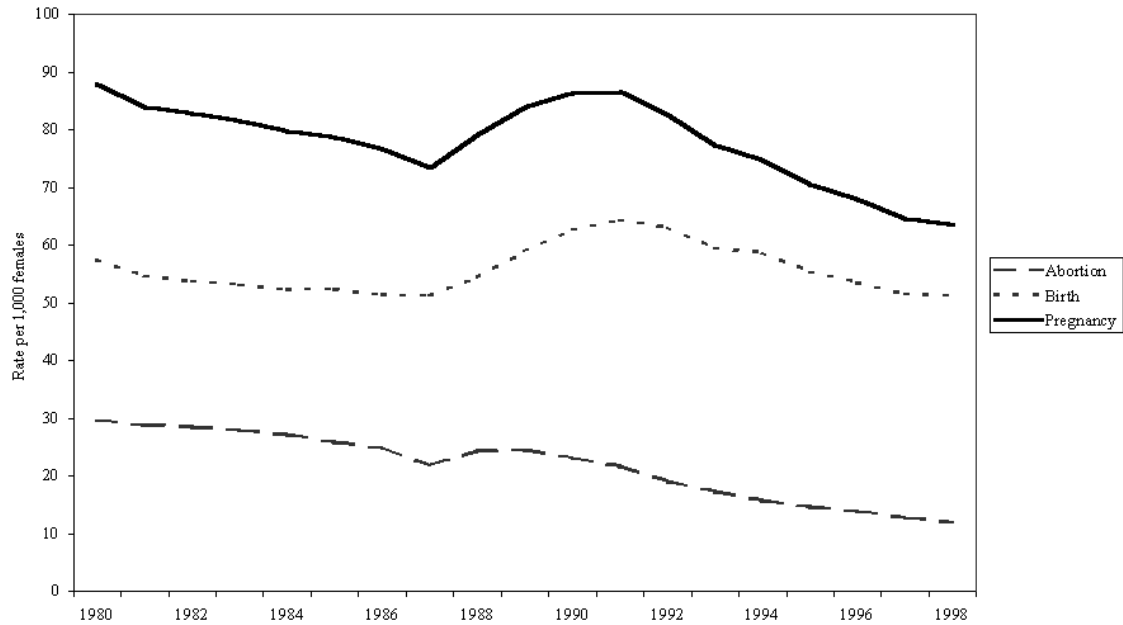
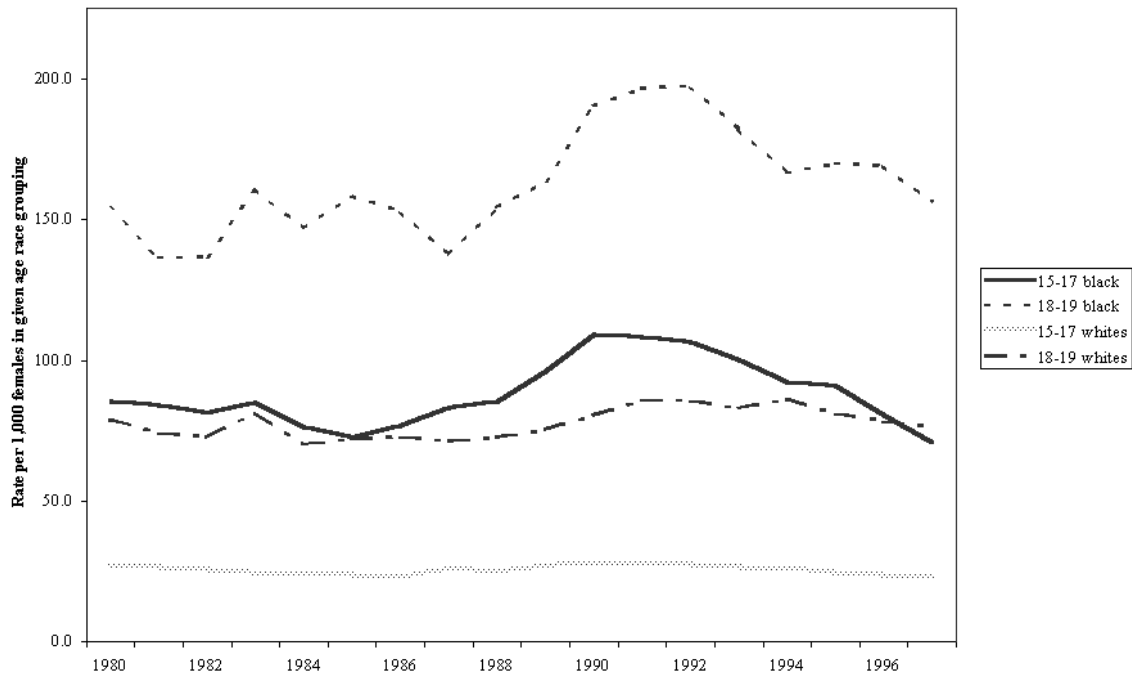


Figure 2
Fertility Rates by Mother's Race and Age: Missouri 1980-1997



Provisional Vital Statistics for May 1999

Live births in November were virtually the same as the previous November (5,466 in 1998 vs. 5,445 in 1997).

Cumulative births for the 11- and 12-month periods ending with November both show increases, 0.7 percent for the 11-month period and 4.1 percent for the 12-month period.

Deaths increased in November as 4,509 Missourians died compared with 4,078 one year earlier. However, cumulative deaths for 11- and 12-month periods ending with November both show decreases.

The **Natural increase** for November was 957 (5,466 births minus 4,509 deaths). Cumulative natural increase data for the 11- and 12-month periods ending both show increases in 1998.

Marriages increased in November, but decreased for the cumulative 11- and 12-month periods ending with November.

Dissolutions of marriage increased for all three time periods shown below. The marriage to divorce ratio for the 12 months ending with November decreased from 1.73 to 1.67.

Infant deaths increased slightly for January-November from 7.8 per 1,000 live births to 8.0.

PROVISIONAL RESIDENT VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Item	May				Jan. May cumulative				12 months ending with May				
	Number		Rate*		Number		Rate*		Number		Rate*		
	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
Live Births	5,512	5,853	11.9	12.2	30,679	30,681	13.6	13.5	74,062	75,654	13.6	13.7	13.9
Deaths	3,460	4,233	7.5	8.8	22,752	24,172	10.1	10.7	53,230	54,799	10.1	9.8	10.1
Natural increase	2,052	1,620	4.4	3.4	7,927	6,509	3.5	2.9	20,832	20,855	3.5	3.8	3.8
Marriages	4,997	2,691	10.8	5.6	15,491	13,514	6.9	6.0	43,717	41,708	8.4	8.1	7.7
Dissolutions	2,134	2,050	4.6	4.3	10,284	10,120	4.6	4.5	25,406	25,141	4.7	4.7	4.6
Infant deaths	41	41	7.4	7.0	254	238	8.3	7.8	556	581	8.1	7.5	7.7
Population base(in thousands)	...	...	5,439	5,470	...	...	5,439	5,470	...	...	5,383	5,421	5,452

*Rates for live births, deaths, natural increase, marriages and dissolutions are computed on the number per 1,000 estimated population. The infant death rate is based on the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Rates are adjusted to account for varying lengths of monthly reporting periods.

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